

Policy pointers

Developing countries can seize the opportunity provided by the Global Stocktake to clarify their national adaptation policies and initiatives and communicate progress on their adaptation efforts to the international community.

Countries should first identify their adaptation efforts to build a coherent national adaptation story. This narrative should highlight successes, identify gaps and aim to improve cooperation between actors.

National processes to inform the GST should be inclusive. An essential first step is to develop tailored and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems to track progress and ensure marginalised voices are heard.

Countries should clearly communicate their national adaptation story, using reporting instruments that reflect all four dimensions of adaptation covered by the GST. Adaptation communications must be clearly labelled to increase global recognition.

Global Stocktake: three priorities to drive adaptation action

The new Global Stocktake (GST) is a unique opportunity to drive global climate ambition and support, and increase global collaboration on long-term climate goals. It aims to create evidence-based collective learning to inform future decisions, both national and global. But to effectively measure progress, countries must decide how and what information is included in their GST inputs. In this briefing, we provide an overview of the adaptation dimensions required under the GST and of progress to date to define these. Focusing on the needs and circumstances of developing countries, we suggest three practical priority steps countries can take to prepare their GST inputs: creating a coherent narrative on national adaptation actions, building an inclusive process that ensures adaptation actions reflect voices from the whole of society, and communicating progress to the international community.

Tracking adaptation action: the challenges

The Global Stocktake was established in 2015 under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement as the process for taking stock of collective progress under the different workstreams of the Paris Agreement. The GST aims to act as a 'ratcheting' mechanism, through which countries will raise their climate ambitions and increase collaboration in light of the evidence generated.¹ Launching late in 2021, the GST will take until 2023 to complete. It will finish in time to inform countries for their next Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) due in 2025 (see Box 1). Subsequent GSTs will take place every five years.

The GST provides a unique opportunity to create evidence-based collective learning to drive ambitions for climate actions and support, in particular finance, following principles of equity and the best available science.² How and what information is included in the GST will thus set

precedents for future decisions, both nationally and globally.

A long list of information sources to input into Phase 1 has already been negotiated.³ Initial preparations are underway. But not all modalities and inputs that countries need so that they can prepare for the GST have been detailed.⁴ In particular, under the theme of adaptation, several items are not yet fully defined.

Box 1. Three phases of the Global Stocktake

The GST will consist of three phases.¹⁴ The first phase in 2021 is information collection and preparation. It will then continue to run in parallel with the second technical assessment phase in 2022–23. The last phase of the consideration of outputs will take place in 2023, although timelines may change depending on progress.

Inviting different actors to participate in national dialogues is critical for local and disaggregated voices to be heard

The GST will cover four interrelated dimensions of adaptation. Article 7.14 of the Paris Agreement states that the GST will consider:

- Recognising adaptation efforts of developing country Parties
- Enhancing the implementation of adaptation actions, taking into account adaptation communications
- Reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support, and
- Reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).

Defining the dimensions of adaptation: progress to date

Since 2015, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Adaptation Committee⁵ (AC) has progressed work on defining the four dimensions of adaptation under the GST. The AC has explored the definitions, scope and implications of each of the four dimensions. Other studies have been done by — or in collaboration with — bodies such as the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA). The following sections outline key progress under each dimension to date.

Recognising adaptation efforts. Work on the recognition of the adaptation efforts of developing countries was mandated to the AC and LEG from 2016. It entails the realisation of synthesis reports on specific adaptation themes every two years. These aim to untangle challenges in assessing adaptation progress. Published in 2020, the first synthesis report focuses on how developing countries are addressing hazards, relevant lessons learnt and good practices.⁶ A forthcoming report for 2022 will focus on the efforts of developing countries in assessing and meeting the costs of adaptation.

Additionally, there was progress in how recognition of efforts can flow through each stage of the GST through Decision 11/CMA.1 made at COP24, Katowice in 2018. However, it is still unclear how the recognition will be tracked and how it is linked to the adequacy of action and support.

Reviewing adequacy and effectiveness.

Compared to the other dimensions, the mandate

on reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support is still underdeveloped. From literature reviews and submissions, the AC and LEG led a compilation of existing methodologies that can be used to assess adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation. This is shared in the Adaptation Knowledge Portal.⁷ The compilation distinguishes between adaptation and support methodologies and types of information for reviewing a) effectiveness and b) adequacy. Methodologies to assess effectiveness are particularly relevant for countries when developing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems. Methodologies for assessing adequacy are particularly useful for countries during their adaptation planning and implementation.⁸

Adaptation communications (ADCOMS).

Core work on adaptation communications (ADCOMS) became part of the APA agenda under Item 4 in 2017. An ADCOM is a report prepared by countries that synthesises and shares their priorities, actions, needs and learning around adapting to climate change. An ADCOM can be a separate report or included as part of other reporting instruments such as the NDCs, National Communications (NC) or National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The purpose of ADCOMS is to ensure a balance between mitigation and adaptation by increasing the visibility and profile of adaptation, strengthening adaptation actions and support in developing countries, and providing input into the GST Decision 9/CMA.1. The AC is also developing draft supplementary guidance for the voluntary use of ADCOMS by Parties.⁹

Reviewing progress of the GGA. The GGA aims to drive collective action on climate adaptation. Since 2018, the AC has worked to untangle many complex methodological and technical issues.¹⁰ Although long overdue, a new robust technical report unpacks the challenges and methods to inform the GGA.¹¹ It shows the difficulty of assessing collective progress on adaptation from individual country reports and of capturing how these individual efforts create outcomes that can be greater than the sum of their parts in terms of global progress. This is an inherent challenge for both the GGA and the GST.

The AC has also provided key recommendations on the GGA in its 2021 report for Parties ahead of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26).¹² Over the last year, the AC and the Chile and UK COP presidencies have held workshops to provide spaces for Parties to reflect and exchange views on the GGA.

Three priorities for driving adaptation action

Despite the fact that work is still ongoing for most dimensions, the scope and extent of what each dimension entails within the GST are not fully decided. This lack of clarity may give countries flexibility to identify their own priorities as to what information they want to provide. But it also creates confusion about where to start. Moreover, the work on clarifying the content for each dimension has been segmented to the extent that the interrelationships between the four dimensions have not been fully recognised or adequately worked on.

Nonetheless, the first phase of the GST provides countries with a unique driver to catalyse progress on adaptation actions. It can galvanise national thinking, coordination and planning — and drive decisions on adaptation finance. But so far, the four dimensions have been addressed in siloed workstreams, with different working groups making separate recommendations for Parties to consider.

The co-chairs of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) recently published a helpful non-paper (an unofficial report) with key questions to help countries prepare and harmonise their inputs for the GST, including questions on adaptation.¹ Nevertheless, the challenge of how to consider the links between the four dimensions of adaptation remains unaddressed. This makes it hard for countries to get a clear understanding of how to assess progress for each dimension — and how they interact and link in a national context.

To move forward in preparing their GST inputs, each country needs to start by building its own coherent national adaptation story to communicate to an international audience, based on the key guidance already produced. For developing countries, this will be critical as they start collating information and evidence. But how can this be done in practice? In this section, we outline three interlinked priorities for action.

Create a coherent national adaptation story.

The first priority for countries is to create a coherent national narrative of their adaptation efforts. Not all countries already have an overarching national climate strategy articulating their climate context, risks, impacts or priorities for work, let alone defined units coordinating policies and data. Climate work is generally split across policies, plans and initiatives, ministries and committees. When

focal points are appointed to draw links between siloed national efforts, they are often under-resourced.

In such contexts, countries can begin by creating a holistic and shared understanding of their national adaptation efforts. What is the national climate context? Which policies have been implemented? What effects have they produced? How much money has been spent? This is the best way to determine what efforts should be recognised and highlighted under the GST. It links adaptation efforts to the data and evidence produced to date on the effectiveness and adequacy of adaptation actions. It also develops a realistic picture of national institutional and policy frameworks on adaptation. This will help developing countries to understand their successes and the gaps and improve cooperation between actors — both nationally and internationally.

Create an inclusive process. A strong national narrative on adaptation must reflect the voices of all social groups and actors. The second of these interlinked priorities is that countries should seek ongoing contributions and participation from local actors and marginalised and Indigenous groups. This way, their presence and priorities can feature in national and international discourses. Inviting different actors to participate in national dialogues is critical for local and disaggregated voices to be heard at each of the three stages of the GST. This includes taking part in technical dialogues and high-level events.

An essential first step in creating an inclusive GST process is to develop tailored and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems to capture and account for disaggregated national narratives. MEL systems can track progress towards national goals, but also the extent of finance and support provided and received. This can help recognise the different starting points of countries in planning and implementing adaptation, and guide adaptation finance to where it is most needed. Designing and strengthening MEL systems is a critical step for an inclusive and equitable GST process, but also for other exercises such as the GGA and drafting biennial transparency reports (BTRs). It can help make sense of all four dimensions of adaptation simultaneously, and linking progress from local to global levels.

Communicate progress on adaptation. The third priority is to decide how best to communicate your national narrative on adaptation so that it is visible to the international community. There are many instruments that can be used to report progress on adaptation actions, such as NDCs, NAPs and national

Box 2. ADCOMs and recognition of adaptation efforts

To date, only 21 countries worldwide have submitted ADCOMs. Yet most of these have not expressly reported on national adaptation efforts for their recognition. Some, such as Costa Rica, reported on institutional articulation, improved response capacity and information availability. Timor-Leste identified institutional efforts and how it has invested in maximising co-benefits between adaptation and mitigation.

However, only three countries deliberately included efforts for their recognition in the context of the GST: Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay. Argentina reported on its new legal, institutional and programmatic framework for climate change that involves participatory governance and national and sub-national adaptation planning processes. Ecuador's efforts included legislative progress and integrating adaptation into local development planning. Uruguay reported on efforts to incorporate national progress across sectors in line with its National Policy on Climate Change.

communications.¹³ Each has different yet overlapping content and purposes. However, not all instruments allow for reporting on all four adaptation dimensions of the GST. For example, NAPs do not require reporting on the recognition of adaptation efforts.

Developing countries should not be burdened with additional reporting systems. But their adaptation efforts must be recognised, regardless of which reporting instrument they use. Biennial transparency reports (BTRs) will be a key input source for the GST. Yet using this option is not that straightforward. While BTRs are mandatory for most countries and can include all four dimensions of adaptation, communicating adaptation information within them is voluntary. In addition, the first BTRs will also only be ready in 2024, after the initial GST.

This leaves space for countries to use ADCOMs instead (Box 2). This should help the UNFCCC Secretariat to identify relevant information for each GST dimension regardless of the reporting instrument used. Yet most countries who submitted a new or revised NDCs in 2020 did not label ADCOMs sections.

Countries should identify their adaptation information clearly so that the Secretariat does not miss key evidence and inputs. However, the

lack of finance to support countries in developing ADCOMs is an additional barrier.

Catalysing change: the opportunity is now

For countries inputting into the Global Stocktake, the GST should provide an opportunity to understand the multiple and often contradicting attributes of adaptation, and seeks ways forward through cooperation. An inclusive and evidence-based GST process can point to how to resolve trade-offs and find synergies. For developing countries, following the three priorities discussed here will be a step towards closing the adaptation gap. Creating a visible, inclusive national narrative on adaptation will help to improve access to finance and enhance adaptation actions that are vital to providing real protection against climate impacts. Ultimately, the GST represents an exciting opportunity to reflect and learn on how best to develop more effective pathways for resilient development.

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Notes

¹ Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI (2021) Preparing for the first Global Stocktake. Revised non-paper. <https://bit.ly/3pgYInJ> / ² Milkoreit, M and Haapala, K (2017) Designing the global stocktake: a global governance innovation. Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions. <https://bit.ly/3AFb2zU> / ³ UNFCCC, GST - Information collection and preparation. <https://bit.ly/3FF3Vv9> / ⁴ Fyson, C (8 May 2018) Taking stock of the Global Stocktake. Climate Analytics. <https://bit.ly/3DIDGSZ> / ⁵ The lead body working on adaptation under the UNFCCC. See <https://unfccc.int/Adaptation-Committee> / ⁶ United Nations Climate Change Secretariat (2020) Synthesis report by the Adaptation Committee in the context of the recognition of adaptation efforts of developing countries: how developing countries are addressing hazards, focusing on relevant lessons learned and good practices. <https://unfccc.int/documents/267818> / ⁷ UNFCCC, Adaptation Knowledge Portal. www.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Home.aspx / ⁸ UNFCCC Adaptation Committee and LEG (2020) Methodologies for reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of adaptation and support (AC18). <https://unfccc.int/documents/262932> / ⁹ UNFCCC Adaptation Committee (2021) Draft supplementary guidance for voluntary use by Parties in communicating information in accordance with the possible elements of an adaptation communication (AC20). <https://unfccc.int/documents/302833> / ¹⁰ Beauchamp, E, da Silva Bernardo, C and del Pilar Bueno, M (2021) Progressing the Global Goal on Adaptation – key issues. IIED, London. pubs.iied.org/17773iied / ¹¹ Adaptation Committee (2021) Approaches to reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the global goal on adaptation. Technical Paper. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ac20_5a_gga_tp.pdf / ¹² Adaptation Committee (2021) Report of the Adaptation Committee 2021. <https://unfccc.int/documents/307007> / ¹³ Aragon, I, Alcobé, F and Idriss, YJD (2021) Updating NDCs: useful guidance to support greater ambition. pubs.iied.org/20341iied / ¹⁴ UNFCCC, Global Stocktake. <https://unfccc.int/topics/global-stocktake#eq-1>

